

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT
ON
AN AGREEMENT ON THE DISENGAGEMENT
OF SYRIAN AND ISRAELI FORCES

THE BRIEFING ROOM

AT 1:02 P.M. EDT

Ladies and gentlemen, I have an announcement that will also be made today in Jerusalem and in Damascus. The announcement reads as follows:

"The discussions conducted by United States Secretary of State Dr. Henry Kissinger with Syria and Israel have led to an agreement on the disengagement of Syrian and Israeli forces. The agreement will be signed by Syrian and Israeli military representatives in the Egyptian-Israeli Military Working Group of the Geneva Conference on Friday -- this Friday -- May 31."

Just a word about the significance of this development. It is obviously a major diplomatic achievement, and Secretary Kissinger deserves enormous credit for the work that he has done, along with members of his team, in keeping this negotiation going and finally reaching an agreement when at many times over the past few weeks it seemed that the negotiations would break down.

Also, credit goes to the Governments concerned who had great differences which had to be resolved. I have sent messages of congratulations to Prime Minister Meir of Israel, and also to President Assad of Syria, congratulating them with regard to the statesmanship that they have shown in resolving differences that seemed totally without any prospect of resolution a month or so ago and even, as a matter of fact, several times over the past month.

REFER TO DOS

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MORE

This particular agreement, together with the agreement that was reached earlier on disengagement of Egyptian and Israeli forces now paves the way for progress in Geneva and, of course, with the various governments involved, toward our objective, and we trust their objective as well, of achieving a permanent peace settlement for the entire Mideast area.

However, we should have in mind that despite the fact that these two agreements have now been signed, or have been reached, that there are many difficulties ahead before a permanent settlement is reached. However, what was a major roadblock to any permanent settlement has now been removed, and I think the most difficult roadblock, the roadblock being the differences that had long existed between Israel and Syria.

As far as the United States is concerned, we shall continue with our diplomatic initiatives, working with all governments in the area toward working toward achieving the goal of a permanent settlement, a permanent peace, and I can only say that based on the success in reaching this agreement in which the differences were so great that, the prospects for reaching agreement on a permanent basis I think now are better than they have been at any time over the past 25 years.

Thank you.

END

(AT 1:06 P.M. EDT)

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Department of State

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TELEGRAM

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM SCOTES
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EQ 11052: GOS

TAGS: OVIP (HENRY A. KISSINGER)

SUBJECT: TRANSPORTATION FOR SYRIAN DELEGATION

REF: JERUSALEM 1189 (NOTAL)

1. IMMEDIATELY AFTER SEEING ROY ATHERTON OFF AT THE AIRPORT, I CALLED ON PRESIDENTIAL SECRETARY DABOUL THIS MORNING TO PROBE FURTHER CONCERNING TRANSPORTATION FOR THE SYRIAN DELEGATION. BEFORE I HAD A CHANCE TO SAY ANYTHING, I WAS SUMMONED TO THE TELEPHONE TO SPEAK TO GENERAL SMIHABI WHO AMONG OTHER THINGS TOLD ME THE DELEGATION WAS ON ITS WAY. IT WAS OBVIOUSLY TOO LATE TO DO ANYTHING FURTHER BUT I TOOK OPPORTUNITY TO TELL DABOUL THAT WE WOULD HAVE BEEN PREPARED TO HELP OUT IN THIS REGARD SHOULD WE HAVE BEEN ASKED. MR. DABOUL WAS MOST APPRECIATIVE OF THE OFFER.

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